

YOU CAN SET THEIR SPIRIT  
**FREE**

**WAR  
PRISONERS  
Aid**

MEMBER AGENCY OF NATIONAL WAR FUND



E. McKnight Kauffer

## *Aid for the "Barbed-Wire Legion"*

**O**NE of the greatest struggles of the war goes on behind barbed wire — the grim, silent struggle of the millions of prisoners of war to keep their hope and courage, some measure of individuality, and even their mental stability.

Taken suddenly from the active, exciting life of fighting for a cause close to their hearts, the prisoners are thrust behind barbed

wire, cut off from news of world developments, and face endless hours of stagnant idleness or dreary labor. As days turn to months, and months to years, the very weight of time in prison becomes unbearable.

To help these millions of "soldiers out of luck" make the best of their lot is the aim of War Prisoners Aid, member agency of the National War Fund. Work of War Prisoners Aid is provided for in the Geneva Convention of 1929, a pact signed by most of the Allied and Axis belligerents, which provides for the humane treatment of war prisoners and sets forth standards of food, clothing, shelter, medical care and makes allowance for educational, recreational and religious activities.

But at best, life as a prisoner is bleak and barren, even when the terms of the Geneva Convention are met in their entirety. Worry over loved ones, problems of the future, the dull, monotonous routine of camp life, lack of any privacy, the ignominy of working in the enemy's fields or on his roads, the constant pacing back and forth in the prison compounds—all these wear away a prisoner's stamina, leaving raw, aching nerves that scream for relief.

*Giving that relief in the form of recreational, educational and occupational activities is the function of War Prisoners Aid. By providing the prisoners with activities to keep their minds and hands busy, War Prisoners Aid helps make more tolerable life behind barbed wire.*

## How it Works

Neutral representatives make regular visits to the prison camps to learn the needs of their men. On the basis of their reports, headquarters in Geneva, Stockholm, New York and other centers send the needed materials. Work in the camps such as teaching classes, directing athletic programs or providing entertainment is conducted by qualified prisoners who in civilian life were engaged in similar occupations.



Hundreds of tons of materials have been distributed by the three agencies comprising War Prisoners Aid, Inc. One agency alone, through only one of its warehouses, distributed 526,000 books, 275,000 athletic items and 270,000 other items during the 17-months' period from December, 1942 to May, 1944.

*The scope of the work is wide:*

## Athletics

War Prisoners Aid supplies the men with sports equipment of all kinds to give them a constructive outlet for their energies, safety valves for pent-up emotions. Shipments include footballs; basketballs and nets; soccer balls; baseballs, bats and gloves; tennis balls, rackets and nets; boxing gloves; medicine balls. Indoor games are also provided in large numbers — ping-pong, chess, checkers, playing cards, darts, pool, billiards, etc.

## Crafts

Handicrafts are doubly valuable for their therapy of mind and body and for occupational training. Prisoners attain amazing skills and produce beautiful work with materials given them by War Prisoners Aid. Equipment is provided for almost every conceivable craft and hobby, including painting, clay modelling, wood carving, metal work, carpentry, basketry, weaving, leather work and bookbinding. Wigs and make-up kits are sent to encourage amateur theatricals, which have become very popular with the prisoners.

## Music

Musical instruments of every variety, sheet music, phonographs and records are eagerly received in the camps. Talented musicians organize camp orchestras and give concerts for their fellow-prisoners. For those less skilled, War Prisoners Aid provides such simple instruments as mouth organs and ocarinas.

## Education

Among the prisoners of war are hundreds of thousands whose scholastic work was cut short by the war. They call for textbooks, study courses, papers and pencils and other educational materials in order to continue their education or learn new trades and professions that they may be better prepared for their return to civilian life. From within their own ranks they find teachers, many of them former professors, to carry on the courses and give them instruction. Courses range from grammar school through college as well as many professional and graduate courses. Many of these "universities of captivity" offer as many as 170 hours of work a week, and have a curriculum comparable to that of a liberal arts college. With the aid of the United States Armed Forces Institute, hundreds of additional courses of study are being made available to American prisoners of war. A plan of giving examinations administered from Geneva, Switzerland, and the keeping of academic records for later presentation for credit to American schools and colleges is being put into effect. This will help American prisoners obtain postwar credit for their prison camp studies.

Among the many thousands of books shipped by War Prisoners Aid are textbooks in all subjects, dictionaries and grammars for language study, literature and popular fiction, biography, history and psychology. Libraries are established for less formal studies and for recreational reading.

## Religious Program

Religious articles and literature are provided through special funds made available to War Prisoners Aid by the various religious denominations. Through this medium men are encouraged in their spiritual fight to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience.



## **Reciprocal Service**

War Prisoners Aid extends its help to both Allied and Axis prisoners. It is allowed to work for American and Allied prisoners held by the Axis powers only because a similar service is rendered to Axis prisoners held by the United Nations. The work is carried on in more than twenty-five different countries on six continents.

In the Far East, War Prisoners Aid, through a committee of neutral citizens, has purchased in Japan and sent to war prison camps large quantities of books, athletic equipment, indoor and outdoor games, musical instruments, handicraft materials and gardening tools and seeds.

## **War Prisoners Aid, the Red Cross and the U. S. Government**

The United States government regards American prisoners as members of the Armed Forces and contributes to their welfare by providing food, clothing, and other materials for their comfort. Through the Protecting Power (Switzerland) the United States government constantly uses its influence to secure full compliance with the Geneva Convention for members of its armed forces held by the enemy.

War Prisoners Aid has accepted responsibility for the recreational, educational and occupational assistance to war prisoners. There is no conflict between the work of the Red Cross and War Prisoners Aid. They collaborate closely, both in this country and in the prison camps.

The specific function of the Red Cross is the distribution of supplementary food packages, clothing, medical supplies, comfort articles and maintenance in Geneva of an in-

ternational clearing house by which governments (and through them next of kin) are informed of the prisoner's capture and his address.

## A Cooperative Project of the American People

The program of War Prisoners Aid, Inc.  
is carried on by:—

WAR PRISONERS AID COMMITTEE  
OF THE Y.M.C.A.

DR. JOHN R. MOTT, *Chairman*

WORLD STUDENT SERVICE FUND

MISS META GLASS, *President*

WAR RELIEF SERVICES—NATIONAL  
CATHOLIC WELFARE CONFERENCE

MGR. PATRICK A. O'BOYLE,

*Executive Director*

All three agencies are participating services  
of the National War Fund, 46 Cedar Street,  
New York City, through which funds are  
made available for the operation of the  
program of War Prisoners Aid.



*You can "set their spirit free" and  
support the work of War Prisoners  
Aid by your gift to your Community  
War Fund, representing the National  
War Fund.*

**WAR PRISONERS AID**  
INCORPORATED